SCIENCE MADE SIMPLE: No. 1

Though this column is intended to be a source of innocent merriment for all sexes and not to concern itself with weighty matters, I have asked my sponsors, the makers of Marlboro, whether I might not, from time to time, use this space for a short lesson in science. "Makers," I said to them, "might I not, from time to time, use this space for a short lesson in science?"

They agreed with many a kindly smile, the makers of Marlboro, for they are the most agreeable of men. Their benevolence is due in no small measure to the cigarettes they smoke, for Marlboro is a cigarette to soothe the most savage of breasts. I refer not only to the flavor which, as everyone knows, is a delight to the palate, but also to the Marlboro container. Here is so fiendishly contrived device to fray the fingernails and rasp the nerves; here, instead, is a flip-top box that opens like a charm, and inside you find a handy red tape to lift out the cigarettes with ease and dispatch. Add to all this the best filter ever made, and you can see that you get a lot to like.

Let us begin our series of science lessons with chemistry. It is fitting that chemistry should be the first, for it is the oldest of sciences, having been discovered by Benjamin Franklin in 408 B.C. when an apple fell on his head while he was shooting the breeze with Pythagoras one day outside the Acropolis. (The reason they were outside the Acropolis and not inside was that Pythagoras had been thrown out for drawing right triangles all over the walls.)

They had several meetings outside the Acropolis, but finally Franklin said, "Look, Pythagoras, this is nothing against you, see, but I'm no youngster anymore and if I keep laying around on this wet grass with you, I'm liable to get the breakbone fever. I'm going inside." Pythagoras, friendless now, moped around Athens for awhile, then drifted off to Monaco where he married a girl named Harriet Sigafoos and went into the shark-repellent business. (He would certainly be forgotten today had not Shakespeare written "You Know Me, Al.")

But I digress. We were beginning a discussion of chemistry, and the best way to begin is with fundamentals. Chemicals are divided into elements. There are four: air, earth, fire, and water. Any number of delightful combinations can be made from these elements, such as firewater, bacon, and chef's salad.

Chemicals can be further divided into the classes of explosive and non-explosive. A wise chemist always touches a match to his chemicals before he begins an experiment.

A variety of vessels of different sizes and shapes are used in a chemistry lab. There are tubes, vials, beakers, flasks, pipettes, and retorts. A retort is also a snappy comeback, such as "Oh, yeah?" and "So's your Uncle Oscar."

I have now told you the most important aspects of chemistry, but there are many more—far too many to cover in the space remaining here. However, I am sure there is a free chemistry lab on your very own campus. Why don't you go up some afternoon and poke around? Make a fun day out of it. Bring sandwiches. Wear humorous hats. Toast frankfurters on the Bunsen burners. Be gay. Be merry. Be loose . . . For chemistry is your friend!

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The makers of Marlboro, who bring you this column regularly, are tobacconists, not scientists. But here's an experiment we do know: Marlboro plus you equals pleasure.

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